

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4132

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 5186

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CI, PINT, ELAB

SUBJECT: ARRESTS OF COPPER UNION LEADERS

REF: SANTIAGO 5051

1. SUMMARY: COPPER WORKER CONFED (CTC) LEADERS REPORT ALL EFFORTS TO EFFECT RELEASE NINE LEADERS AND TWO WORKERS ARRESTED JULY 18 HAVE BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL. AFTER CLAIMING VARIETY REASONS FOR ARRESTS, GOC NOW REPORTEDLY CLAIMS ELVEN HELD ON SUSPICION OF "SABOTAGING PRODUCTION". CTC PRES. SANTANA SAYS HE HAS BEEN WARNED TO SOFT-PEDAL EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF DETAINEES AND THAT LABOR MINISTER TOLD HIM HE IS CONFINED TO LIMITS OF SANTIAGO. FROM INFORMATION AVAILABLE IT APPEARS GOC HAS MADE MISTAKE FROM WHICH THEY HAVE FOUND NO WAY OUT. IF LEADERS ARE NOT EVENTUALLY RETURNED TO JOBS AND UNION OFFICES, INCIDENT WILL PROBABLY CONTRIBUTE TOWARD WIDENING GROWING RIFT BETWEEN LABOR AND GOC. END SUMMARY.

2. LABATT RECEIVED REPORTS FROM LEADERS COPPER WORKERS CONFED (CTC) LATE JULY 24 THAT NINE COPPER UNION LEADERS AND TWO WORKERS STILL BEING HELD IN COPIAPO JAIL, AND THAT ALL THEIR EFFORTS TO EFFECT RELEASE HAVE BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL. FEW PRESS REPORTS WHICH HAVE APPEARED CONFLICT ON NUMBER OF LEADERS DETAINED AND REASONS FOR DETENTION. SEVERAL OF THESE CLAIM ARRESTS WERE MADE BECAUSE OF "DIFFERENCES OF OPINION ON ASSIGNMENT OF WORK TOURS (DISCREPANCIAS EN LA

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APLICACION DE TURNOS)".

3. CTC PRES. GUILLERMO SANTANA REPORTS HE HAS MET WITH MINISTERS OF LABOR AND INTERIOR AND SEC.GEN. OF GOC DURING PAST TWO DAYS. MIN/LABOR TOLD HIM THAT LATTER IS CONFINED TO SANTIAGO UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE AND THAT HE SHOULD NOT TALK TO ANYONE OUTSIDE GOC ABOUT MATTER. SANTANA REPORTEDLY WAS INFORMED THAT ALL LEADERS WERE ARRESTED ON SUSPCION OF "SABOTAGING PRODUCTION" AND THAT GOC BELIEVED HE HAD LED THE EFFORT.

4. SANTANA ALSO REPORTED THAT EX-PRES. EDUARDO FREI HAD SENT ADVISE TO HIM TO MAKE NO FURTHER PROTESTS ON THE MATTER AND "BE CONCERNED FOR HIS OWN SAFETY AND FREEDOM".

5. SANTANA SAID SUBSEC LABOR LUIS RIBALTA TOLD HIM HE THINKS GOC WILL PROBABLY RELEASE ALL LEADERS WITHIN SHORT TIME AND THAT THEY WILL BE SUBSEQUENTLY DISCMISSED FROM JOBS FOR FAILURE TO REPORT TO WORK (AND CONSEQUENTLY LOSE THEIR UNION OFFICES). HE SAID GOC COULD NOT RELEASE THEM IMMEDIATELY BECAUSE IT WOULD BE AN ADMISSION OF A MISTAKE. HE ALSO ISSUED FRIENDLY WARNING THAT SANTANA SHOULD SOFT-PEDAL HIS EFFORTS FOR THEIR RELEASE.

6. RIBALTA ALSO CONFIDED THAT ATACAMA PROV. MILITARY AUTHORITIES HAD REPORTED TO PRESIDENT PINOCHET RECENTLY THAT SALVADOR MINE LEADERS WERE PREPARING SOME FORM OF PROTEST DURING VISIT (NOW CANCELLED) OF UN HUMAN RIGHTS TEAM. PINOCHET REPORTEDLY GAVE ORDERS TO "TIGHTEN UP" SECURITY OF PROVINCE.

7. ANOTHER ARREST WAS REPORTED TO LABATT BY MILTON PUGA, CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT (PDC) LEADER OF A UNION IN EL TENIENTE COPPER MINE COMPLEX. HE CLAIMS THAT ON JULY 18 (SAME DAY AS SALVADOR ARRESTS) CIVILIAN ATTIREED MEN ARRESTED TENIENTE LEADER HUGO ORTIZ (PDC) IN RANCAGUA. ACCORDING PUGA (WHO SAW ORTIZ AFTER RELEASE) ORTIZ CLAIMS HE WAS BEATEN BADLY (BROKEN NOSE) AND HAD HAND GENERATOR ELECTRIC CURRENT APPLIED TO VARIOUS PARTS OF HIS BODY IN ATTEMPT TO OBTAIN IDENTITY OF "PDC CHIEF OF RANCAGUA". SANTANA BELIEVES THIS LATTER INCIDENT IS NOT CONNECTED WITH ARRESTS AT SALVADOR. CONFIDENTIAL

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8. COMMENT: IT STILL APPEARS THAT ACTION IS PRODUCT OF ZEALOUS ATACAMA INTENDENT ALVAREZ. VARIETY OF PRETEXTS FOR ARRESTS ALONG WITH CLAIMS ATTRIBUTED TO RIBALTA LEAD US TO BELIEVE ARRESTS WERE MISTAKE FOR WHICH THE GOC HAS YET TO FIND A FACE SAVING EXCUSE.

9. ALTHOUGH THE INCIDENT IS STILL CONFINED TO ONLY ONE AREA

OF COPPER MINING, IT IS LIKELY TO CAUSE SERIOUS RIPPLES IN
MANY OTHER SECTORS OF ORGANIZED LABOR. CHILEAN LABOR HAS
ALWAYS LOOKED TOWARD COPPER LABOR AS AMONG THE MOST IMPORTANT AND
MILITANT WORKERS. UNLESS SOME CONCESSIONS ARE MADE BY THE
GOC, THE INCIDENT WILL PROBABLY WIDEN THE GROWING RIFT BETWEEN
LABOR AND GOVERNMENT.
POPPER

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